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ROADMAP TO REFORM: Points to be made in
Little Hoover Commission Hearing, November 20, 2003

NOTE: The suggestions here are primarily on the “how” rather than the “what”. The latter is much easier to decide, but how to get to where you need to, is the hard part.

1. It is important that whatever reform process the new governor will be using will be a guide for the timing and development of the Little Hoover Commission proposals. This may give the Governor and legislative leadership an opportunity to adopt LHC recommendations that would be politically difficult for elected officials to include. This “cross-fertilization” of the two sets of proposals, many of which may be identical or at least similar, make possible a stronger set of reforms. This assumes the development of good communication between the two reform groups, at the very least at the staff level, and of course preferably at all levels.
2. Assuming some coordination in the steps above, it is essential that in the drafting of the two documents, or an amalgamation of the two, the integrity of the document must be preserved. If amendments are allowed at the early stages, as the result of public hearings or discussions with those not on the drafting bodies, the lobbyists will “cherry pick” it (or them) to extinction.
3. What reform measures should be included in anything put on the ballot to have the greatest possibility of success? The two approaches are: “let a thousand flowers bloom” and then pick those that the legislature can agree on and have some chance of voter approval; or for now limit the reforms, maybe seven or eight, that are obviously important to get a better budget process approved, and plan to bring forward others that are important constitutional structural reforms as a second phase of reform effort. Having tried the former in the 1996 Constitutional Revision Commission, I’m inclined to think in this huge fiscal crisis we have, the latter may have a better chance of success. Not as much will be “fixed” if the voters approve, but the purpose of the ballot measure will be easier to explain to the voters. It may avoid too many voters inclined to say “No” because they don’t understand a more complex and all-inclusive measure.
4. Finally, I think the reform groups should not include individuals who represent only one point of view or are focused on one particular reform measure. This means trying to limit the membership to those dedicated to “fixing the problems” rather than those who may be concerned to preserve or change a single provision. The balance between knowledge and experience and independence of thought is not easy to achieve or find but should be pursued to the extent possible. A really tough problem is to limit partisanship from being the sole deciding factor in including or excluding any particular reform measure. The ideal is, of course, good public policy that can guide and endure even in the face of partisan politics.